



**Director of
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① WESTERN EUROPE - LEBANON: Attitudes on MNF Expansion

French, Italian, and Belgian willingness to contribute to the expansion of the multinational force in Lebanon appears largely dependent on the rapid withdrawal of other foreign forces.

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Belgian Foreign Minister Tindemans told the US Ambassador this week Brussels favors contributing troops to the multinational force. He noted, however, that Belgium could not bear the costs involved in maintaining the troops in Lebanon.

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Another Belgian official says sentiment in the Foreign Ministry has been turning against participation in the multinational force. He indicated officials in the Ministry--like their defense counterparts--are worried that Belgian troops would be trapped in a "quagmire." He claimed those fears stemmed in part from a lack of information on US efforts to negotiate withdrawal of foreign forces.

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1-6 The French Ambassador to Beirut has told US officials that Paris is willing to devote up to 2,800 additional troops to the multinational force, and the Italian Ambassador says Rome is prepared to contribute up to another battalion. Both Ambassadors indicated, however, that they would advise their governments to send only token additions until there is a clear need for larger reinforcements. They also expressed concern that a deterioration in Lebanon's political situation--which they fear may result if foreign forces do not withdraw soon--would influence their governments' final decisions.

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Comment: The Belgian Government probably will not agree to provide troops unless it receives strong assurances from the US that the costs of troop deployments will be fully underwritten and that there will be strict limits on the duration of the multinational force. Paris and Rome are likely to remain cautious about expanding their contingents. The French are particularly concerned that involvement of their forces in incidents in the Bekaa Valley or the Shuf region could complicate their relations with the Arab world.

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